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Flagship Inn has new owner, again

By DAN PILLER
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For the second time since 1984, a real estate investor has purchased Arlington's Flagship Inn with plans to renovate the 310-room motel.

Roy Thigpen Properties Inc. of Tulsa completed a deal Friday to purchase the property from AMR Corp., parent of American Airlines Inc. Terms were not disclosed.

Thigpen took immediate possession of the motel and said that a renovation would proceed in coming months. Thigpen owns motels in Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. His firm has an office in Irving.

The new owner described himself as being "proud of owning the only resort-type motel in Arlington."

Carol Swartz, a representative for Thigpen, said, "We will keep the basic theme and operation of the hotel — including its name — and will emphasize service and convention business."

The motel sits on a 19-acre tract and has 15 convention rooms, two villas, five swimming pools and two tennis courts.

In 1984, AMR sold Flagship Inn to Grand Prairie businessman Thomas E. Morris in 1984. But Morris defaulted on a $12 million note in early 1985. AMR foreclosed and became the owner again.

The motel is located near the junction of Texas 360 and Interstate 30 midway between Fort Worth and Dallas.

It is near Six Flags Over Texas and also Arlington Stadium, home of the Texas Rangers American League baseball team.

During its lifetime, it has served as a social and entertainment center for Arlington. Personalities such as John Wayne, James Stewart, George Peppard, Tony Randall and Brooke Shields stayed there.

But in recent years, several new motels were built nearby.

AMR's former subsidiary Sky Chefs Inc. became owner of the motel in 1980 under a corporate reorganization that saw American Airlines' sell off its Americana lodging chain, which had 21 properties.

Its balloom is known as the Crystal Palace, with a full-size stage adequate for professional plays and musicals.

The original business on the property was the Crossroads restaurant. Its owner, Great Southwest Corp., decided to turn it into lodging to serve the nearby Six Flags Over Texas amusement park. In 1962, Great Southwest converted the building into a motel.

A year later, Sky Chefs took over management under Great Southwest ownership. In 1970, American Airlines bought the hotel and included it in its chain.

Since relocating to Texas from New York City in 1979, American held its annual meetings at the Flagship Inn.

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Jan 10, 2025

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